

Oedipus Rex Sophocles Full Text

Oedipus the King
Sophocles
Translated by David Grene

CHARACTERS

OEDIPUS, King of Thebes
JOCASTA, His Wife
CREON, His Brother-in-Law
TEIRESIAS, an Old Blind Prophet

PRIEST

FIRST MESSENGER
SECOND MESSENGER
A HERDSMAN
A CHORUS OF OLD MEN OF THEBES

PART I:

Scene: In front of the palace of Oedipus at Thebes. To the right of the stage near the altar stands the PRIEST with a crowd of children.

OEDIPUS emerges from the central door.

OEDIPUS: Children, young sons and daughters of old Cadmus,¹

why do you sit here with your suppliant crowns?²
the town is heavy with a mingled burden
of sounds and smells, of groans and hymns and
incense;

5 I did not think it fit that I should hear
of this from messengers but came myself,--
I Oedipus whom all men call the Great.

[*He returns to the PRIEST.*]

You're old and they are young; come, speak for them.
What do you fear or want, that you sit here
10 suppliant? Indeed I'm willing to give all
that you may need; I would be very hard
should I not pity suppliants like these.

PRIEST: O ruler of my country, Oedipus,
You see our company around the altar;
15 you see our ages; some of us, like these,
who cannot yet fly far, and some of us
heavy with age; these children are the chosen
among the young, and I the priest of Zeus.
Within the market place sit others crowned
20 with suppliant garlands³, at the double shrine
of Pallas⁴ and the temple where Ismenus
gives oracles by fire⁵. King, you yourself
have seen our city reeling like a wreck

¹ Cadmus n. mythical founder and first king of Thebes, a city in central Greece where the play takes place

² suppliant crowns wreaths worn by people who ask favors of the gods.

³ suppliant garlands branches wound in wool, which were placed on the altar and left there until the suppliant's request was granted.

⁴ double shrine of Pallas the two temples of Athena.

⁵ temple where Ismenus gives oracles by fire Temple of Apollo, located by Ismenus, the Theban river, where the priests studied patterns in the ashes of sacrificial victims to foretell the future.

already; it can scarcely lift its prow

25 out of the depths, out of the bloody surf.

A blight is on the fruitful plants of the earth.

A blight is on the cattle in the fields,

a blight is on our women that no children

are born to them; a God that carries fire,

30 a deadly pestilence, is on our town,

strikes us and spears us not, and the house of Cadmus

is emptied of its people while black Death

grows rich in groaning and in lamentation.⁶

We have not come as suppliants to this altar

35 because we thought of you as a God,

but rather judging you the first of men

in all the chances of this life and when

we mortals have to do with more than man.

You came and by your coming saved our city,

40 freed us from the tribute which we paid of old

to the Sphinx,⁷ cruel singer. This you did

in virtue of no knowledge we could give you,

in virtue of no teaching; it was God

that aided you, men say, and you are held

45 with God's assistance to have saved our lives.

Now Oedipus, Greatest in all men's eyes,

here falling at your feet we all entreat you,

find us some strength for rescue.

Perhaps you'll hear a wise word from some God.

50 perhaps you will learn something from a man

(for I have seen that for the skilled of the practice

the outcome of their counsels live the most).

Noblest of men, go, and raise up our city,

go,-- and give heed. For now this land of ours

55 calls you its savior since you saved it once.

So, let us never speak about your reign

as of a time when first our feet were set

secure on high, but later fell to ruin.

Raise up our city, save it and raise it up.

⁶ lamentation n. expression of deep sorrow

⁷ Sphinx winged female monster at Thebes that ate men who could not answer her riddle: "what is it that walks on four legs at dawn, two legs at midday, and three legs in the evening, and has only one voice; when it walks on most feet, is it weakest?" Creon, appointed ruler of Thebes, offered the kingdom and the hand of his sister, Jocasta, to anyone who could answer the riddle. Oedipus saved Thebes by answering correctly, "Man, who crawls in infancy, walks upright in his prime, and leans on a cane in old age." Outraged, the Sphinx destroyed herself, and Oedipus became King of Thebes

Oedipus Rex Sophocles full text is a quintessential piece of classical literature that has captivated audiences for centuries. Written by the ancient Greek playwright Sophocles, this tragedy delves into themes of fate, free will, and the quest for truth. The story follows Oedipus, the King of Thebes, as he seeks to rid his city of a plague, only to discover that he is the source of its suffering. This article will explore the significance of Oedipus Rex, its themes, characters, and the reasons why the full text remains relevant today.

Overview of Oedipus Rex

Oedipus Rex, also known as Oedipus the King, is one of the most famous tragedies in Western literature. It was written around 429 BC and is part of a trilogy that includes Antigone and Oedipus at Colonus. The play is often studied for its profound exploration of human nature and the complexities

of destiny.

The Plot Summary

The plot of Oedipus Rex unfolds in a series of dramatic revelations:

1. **The Plague:** The play opens with Thebes suffering from a terrible plague. Oedipus sends his brother-in-law, Creon, to the Oracle of Delphi to learn how to save the city.
2. **The Oracle's Message:** Creon returns with the news that the plague will only be lifted when the murderer of the previous king, Laius, is found and punished.
3. **Oedipus's Search:** Determined to save his city, Oedipus vows to find the murderer, unknowingly setting himself on a path to uncover his own dark past.
4. **The Prophecy:** As the investigation unfolds, Oedipus learns that he has fulfilled a prophecy that foretold he would kill his father and marry his mother.
5. **The Revelation:** The tragic climax occurs when Oedipus discovers that he is, in fact, the murderer he has been seeking and that his wife, Jocasta, is his mother.
6. **The Aftermath:** Overcome with horror and guilt, Jocasta takes her life, and Oedipus blinds himself before going into exile.

Themes in Oedipus Rex

Oedipus Rex is rich with themes that resonate with audiences even today. Here are some of the most prominent themes explored in the play:

- **Fate vs. Free Will:** The play raises questions about the extent to which individuals can control their destinies. Oedipus's attempts to avoid his fate ultimately lead him to fulfill it.
- **Blindness and Insight:** The motif of blindness serves as a metaphor for ignorance. Oedipus begins as a sighted man who is blind to the truth, while the blind prophet Teiresias can see the reality of Oedipus's situation.
- **The Search for Truth:** Oedipus's relentless pursuit of knowledge and truth ultimately leads to his downfall. The play suggests that some truths may be too painful to bear.
- **Guilt and Innocence:** Oedipus is both guilty and innocent; he commits heinous acts unknowingly, raising questions about moral responsibility.

Character Analysis

Understanding the characters in Oedipus Rex adds depth to the interpretation of the play's themes and messages.

Oedipus

Oedipus is the tragic hero of the play. Initially portrayed as a confident and capable leader, his tragic flaw (hamartia) is his hubris. His determination to uncover the truth leads to his ruin. Oedipus embodies the struggle between human will and divine fate.

Jocasta

Jocasta is Oedipus's wife and mother, whose character represents the theme of ignorance. She initially tries to dismiss the prophecies and offers comfort to Oedipus, but her eventual realization of the truth leads to her tragic end.

Creon

Creon serves as a foil to Oedipus. He is rational and composed, contrasting Oedipus's impulsiveness. After Oedipus's downfall, Creon emerges as a stabilizing force for Thebes.

Teiresias

Teiresias, the blind prophet, symbolizes the theme of insight. Despite his blindness, he possesses the knowledge of Oedipus's fate, emphasizing the irony of sight and knowledge in the play.

The Significance of the Full Text

The **Oedipus Rex Sophocles full text** is not only a literary masterpiece but also a vital educational tool. Here's why it remains significant:

Cultural Impact

Oedipus Rex has had a profound influence on Western literature and drama. Its themes have inspired countless adaptations and interpretations across various mediums, including literature, theatre, film, and psychology (notably Freud's Oedipus complex).

Educational Value

Studying the full text allows students and scholars to engage with the language, structure, and themes of ancient Greek tragedy. It provides insights into the values and beliefs of ancient Greek society, particularly concerning fate, morality, and human nature.

Psychological Exploration

The play offers profound psychological insights, particularly regarding identity, guilt, and the nature of truth. Its exploration of these themes has made it a subject of interest in psychology, philosophy, and ethics.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the **Oedipus Rex Sophocles full text** is an enduring work that continues to resonate with audiences today. Through its exploration of complex themes, well-crafted characters, and a gripping plot, it invites readers to ponder the nature of fate, the quest for truth, and the human condition. As we navigate the intricacies of our lives, the lessons embedded within Oedipus Rex remind us of the timeless struggle between knowledge and ignorance, choice and destiny. Whether studied in a classroom or enjoyed as a dramatic performance, Oedipus Rex remains a cornerstone of literary and cultural heritage that will continue to provoke thought and discussion for generations to come.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the central theme of Oedipus Rex by Sophocles?

The central theme of Oedipus Rex is the inevitability of fate and the tragic consequences of human actions. The play explores how Oedipus's attempts to escape his prophesied fate ultimately lead him to fulfill it.

How does Oedipus demonstrate the concept of tragic hero in the play?

Oedipus is a classic tragic hero as he possesses noble qualities and a strong sense of justice, but his tragic flaw (hamartia) is his hubris and determination to defy fate, which leads to his downfall.

What role do prophecies play in Oedipus Rex?

Prophecies serve as a critical driving force in Oedipus Rex, shaping the characters' actions and the plot. Oedipus's attempts to avoid the prophecy about killing his father and marrying his mother ultimately bring it to fruition.

Who are the key characters in Oedipus Rex?

Key characters include Oedipus, the King of Thebes; Jocasta, his wife and mother; Creon, Jocasta's brother; Tiresias, the blind prophet; and Laius, Oedipus's biological father.

What is the significance of blindness in Oedipus Rex?

Blindness in Oedipus Rex symbolizes ignorance and the inability to see the truth. While Oedipus is physically sighted, he is blind to his own reality and fate, whereas the blind prophet Tiresias sees the truth clearly.

How does Sophocles use dramatic irony in Oedipus Rex?

Dramatic irony is prevalent throughout Oedipus Rex, as the audience is aware of Oedipus's true identity and fate long before he is. This heightens the tragedy as Oedipus's search for the truth leads him to his doom.

What are the main symbols found in Oedipus Rex?

Main symbols include sight and blindness, the crossroads representing choices and fate, and the plague symbolizing moral decay and the consequences of sin.

What is the significance of the Chorus in Oedipus Rex?

The Chorus in Oedipus Rex serves to comment on the action, reflect the moral and social values of the time, and express the public's emotions and reactions to the events unfolding in the play.

How does Oedipus Rex explore the relationship between free will and fate?

Oedipus Rex explores the tension between free will and fate by depicting Oedipus's struggle to assert his agency while simultaneously being trapped by the fate foretold by the oracle, ultimately suggesting that fate is inescapable.

Find other PDF article:

<https://soc.up.edu.ph/01-text/Book?ID=ALI96-0649&title=1-2-3-4-5-i-caught-a-fish-alive.pdf>

Oedipus Rex Sophocles Full Text

Oedipus - Mythopedia

May 15, 2023 · Oedipus, son of Laius and Jocasta, was a Theban hero and king, destined to unknowingly kill his father and marry his mother. He was also famous for defeating the Sphinx.

Tiresias - Mythopedia

Feb 27, 2023 · Tiresias, a famous blind prophet, played a central role in the mythology of Thebes. His knowledge, experiences, and abilities far surpassed those of ordinary mortals: Tiresias ...

Ismene - Mythopedia

Aug 23, 2023 · Ismene was one of the children of Oedipus and Jocasta. She tried to prevent her sister Antigone from burying their fallen brother Polynices, as this was against the law.

Eteocles - Mythopedia

Oct 2, 2023 · Eteocles was a son of Oedipus, though he and his brother Polynices were both cursed by their father for dishonoring him. When Eteocles failed to respect a prior agreement ...

Sphinx - Mythopedia

Mar 25, 2023 · The Sphinx was a hybrid creature, usually represented with the features of a woman and a lion, as well as (sometimes) the wings of a bird. The Sphinx plagued the Greek ...

Antigone - Mythopedia

Feb 15, 2023 · Antigone, at least in most traditions, was one of the children born from Oedipus' incestuous union with his mother Jocasta. She was a model of filial devotion, helping her ailing ...

Erinyes (Furies) - Mythopedia

Mar 9, 2023 · The Erinyes ("Furies") were terrifying sisters who acted as goddesses of vengeance and retribution. From their grim home in the Underworld, the Erinyes punished crimes that ...

Apollo - Mythopedia

Apr 11, 2023 · Apollo was one of the Twelve Olympians and the Greek god of prophecy, healing, art, and culture. He embodied the Greek ideal of masculine beauty.

Cadmus - Mythopedia

Jul 10, 2023 · Cadmus was the founder of the city of Thebes and served as its first king. At the end of his life, he was transformed into a serpent as punishment for failing to honor the gods.

Zethus - Mythopedia

Oct 9, 2023 · Zethus was a son of Zeus and Antiope. He and his twin brother Amphion were Greek heroes and joint kings of Thebes, whose walls they built themselves. Zethus died of ...

Oedipus - Mythopedia

May 15, 2023 · Oedipus, son of Laius and Jocasta, was a Theban hero and king, destined to unknowingly kill his father and marry his mother. He was also famous for defeating the Sphinx.

Tiresias - Mythopedia

Feb 27, 2023 · Tiresias, a famous blind prophet, played a central role in the mythology of Thebes. His knowledge, experiences, and abilities far surpassed those of ordinary mortals: Tiresias lived ...

Ismene - Mythopedia

Aug 23, 2023 · Ismene was one of the children of Oedipus and Jocasta. She tried to prevent her sister Antigone from burying their fallen brother Polynices, as this was against the law.

Eteocles - Mythopedia

Oct 2, 2023 · Eteocles was a son of Oedipus, though he and his brother Polynices were both cursed by their father for dishonoring him. When Eteocles failed to respect a prior agreement to share ...

Sphinx - Mythopedia

Mar 25, 2023 · The Sphinx was a hybrid creature, usually represented with the features of a woman and a lion, as well as (sometimes) the wings of a bird. The Sphinx plagued the Greek city of ...

Antigone - Mythopedia

Feb 15, 2023 · Antigone, at least in most traditions, was one of the children born from Oedipus' incestuous union with his mother Jocasta. She was a model of filial devotion, helping her ailing ...

Erinyes (Furies) - Mythopedia

Mar 9, 2023 · The Erinyes ("Furies") were terrifying sisters who acted as goddesses of vengeance and retribution. From their grim home in the Underworld, the Erinyes punished crimes that ...

Apollo - Mythopedia

Apr 11, 2023 · Apollo was one of the Twelve Olympians and the Greek god of prophecy, healing, art, and culture. He embodied the Greek ideal of masculine beauty.

Cadmus - Mythopedia

Jul 10, 2023 · Cadmus was the founder of the city of Thebes and served as its first king. At the end of his life, he was transformed into a serpent as punishment for failing to honor the gods.

Zethus - Mythopedia

Oct 9, 2023 · Zethus was a son of Zeus and Antiope. He and his twin brother Amphion were Greek heroes and joint kings of Thebes, whose walls they built themselves. Zethus died of grief after ...

Explore the Oedipus Rex Sophocles full text and uncover the tragic tale of fate and free will. Discover how this classic drama still resonates today!

[Back to Home](#)